

Issue II
April 2021



Fol-de-Rol

The newsletter of the
Yale Glee Club
Associates

Letter from the Director

It is hard to believe that only a little over a month remains of this extraordinary, at times challenging, and at times inspiring academic year.

It has been a year none of us will ever forget, a year that has taught us all to hold fast to the things that matter most, to unburden ourselves from past expectations and assumptions, to be patient, and perhaps most of all to be a source of comfort and connection to those around us.

The students and I continue to gather every Monday night online, where we explore music together and welcome guests from near and far who enrich our understanding of the voice and the music we sing. The students continually amaze me with their resilience. Our most ambitious recording project this semester is the world premiere of a brilliant and virtuosic new work for a cappella chorus and solo vocal ensemble we commissioned last year from composer Joel Thompson: *A Prayer for Deliverance*, which will be performed by the Glee Club and the phenomenal [Kaleidoscope Vocal Ensemble](#). And a record number of students have participated this year as teaching assistants with the Morse Chorale, the flagship choral ensemble of Yale's Music in Schools Initiative.

Last October, many of you joined us for the joint online benefit concert we organized with our friends in the Harvard and Princeton choruses, Hand in Hand. Please stay tuned for more information about our spring installment of Hand in Hand, which will air on Saturday, May 22.

Like the crocuses that began appearing in our yard a couple of weeks ago, small glimmers of hope seem to be all around us now. Perhaps the brightest glimmer for the Glee Club is that, beginning later this week, we will be meeting to sing in person for the first time in over a year. We will be in small groups and will carefully observe safety measures such as masking and distancing, but it's going to feel great.

Yours in song,

Jeff

Virtual Choir Projects

Listen to and watch two of the virtual choir projects we've completed so far this year!



“A Vision Unfolding” (Anthems of a Crowd, Part 1)
by Derrick Spiva Jr.
featuring John Cooper, Neha Bhatt & Alex Whittington, soloists



Geistliches Lied
by Johannes Brahms
featuring Morse Chorale

Alumni Mentorship Update

Thank you to all who signed up for the 2020-2021 YGC Alumni Mentorship Program!

58.6% of current YGC students participated in the Program this year (up from 25.8% participation last year). We had 120 alumni sign up to be mentors. Your overwhelming support allowed us to find a mentor with highly relevant professional and personal experience for each student who signed up. We were able to match:

- surgeons with our pre-med students interested in surgery;
- foreign service officers with global affairs majors;
- an art director & designer with a student interested in graphic design;
- a medical student on a global health fellowship with a pre-med student concentrating in global health;
- a professor specializing in language cognition with a passionate linguistics major;
- entertainment industry professionals with aspiring actors, directors, and producers;
- the operations director of a Chicago dance company with a Chicago native hoping to work for a performing arts nonprofit;
- a professional in the biotech industry with a biomedical engineering major;

and many more.

Most alumni who signed up also opted into having their information included on an Alumni Networking list that we provided to current YGC seniors. We hope this will allow alumni who were not matched with a student to stay engaged with our community, and provide seniors another valuable resource as they approach graduation and begin their careers.

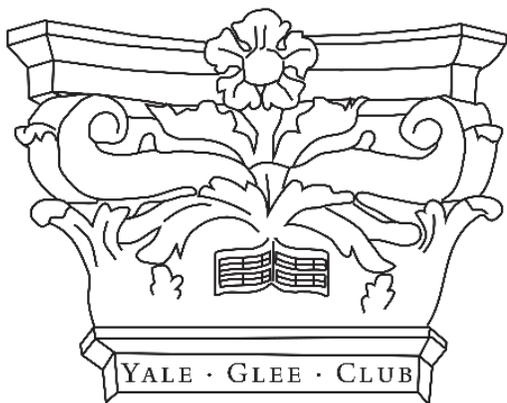
As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to claim lives, upend plans, and keep us apart, we hope that this program has formed opportunities for our alumni to share valuable guidance with current students as we all navigate high levels of uncertainty. Year after year, we are grateful for our alumni community's generosity and eagerness to connect with students, but it's especially meaningful to us this harrowing year. The two of us had a lot of fun putting these mentorship matches together, and we hope that this program will continue to foster professionally and personally meaningful relationships between YGC students and alumni for years to come.

-Laura + Isa

Student Leader Profiles



Divine Uchegbu, *President*



College: Davenport '21

Hometown: Saint Paul, Minnesota

Major: Political Science and French Certificate

Favorite YGC memory this year: My favorite YGC memory from this year has been collecting music from members every Monday to share in the Glews. Since we have not been able to sing together at all this year, it was really important to me that we somehow maintained our musical connection across the globe. Compiling music for the Glews every week is always such an amazing way to start my week and I hope that every member feels the same joy from listening to the list. It is always so fun to listen to what other members are currently listening to, and it gives me an insight to their musical tastes outside of Glee and also makes me feel like we are listening to the songs together. I am always so amazed at how wide our tastes are and I am grateful for all the new artists, songs, and albums that I've been introduced to through the Glews.

Something I've learned in my Glee position: As president this year, I have learned that the YGC is so much more than a musical organization. Of course we all love to sing together and that is why we gather in the first place, but this pandemic and the stress of the school year has made the music take a backseat. As tragic as that has been, I have seen how members have banded together to form communities of support. I have learned that being the president of the YGC during a pandemic means making sure that even though we are all spread out around the world, we feel as connected as possible. Members of the Glee Club love to sing and love the music, but we also crave the feeling of performing that music together so even without the in person singing this year, we have still found ways to maintain those connections and friendships that bring joy. It has been quite challenging trying to transfer the in person community to the zoom-sphere, but the dedication of the members, old and new, has made Glee possible.

Sophie Latham, *Manager*



College: Hopper '21

Hometown: New Haven, CT

Major: Environmental Studies & Energy Studies certificate

YGC memory this year: We had a picnic on cross campus in the fall and we all just shared funny stories and hung out, and it felt really normal in the midst of the least normal year ever, plus that was when I got to meet a lot of the new members in person for the first time!

Something I've learned: I've learned a lot this year, but the biggest lesson has been the strength of the YGC community. First of all, the alumni are so invested and involved which is so great and makes this year feel less out of place. Most importantly, though, I think it is a testament to how much the current members of YGC value Glee and each other that people keep showing up to support one another and to build the community – especially for the new members – despite how much it sucks to hop back on Zoom after a full day of online classes. I already knew that Glee was an amazing community, but watching so many people put in extra work to maintain it this year has really driven the point home, and made me reflect on how important it is to try to stay connected and invested during difficult times. It really gives me a lot of optimism for YGC161; fingers crossed they are back in Hendrie!

Sarah Grube, *Student Conductor*

College: Silliman '22

Hometown: Shaker Heights, OH

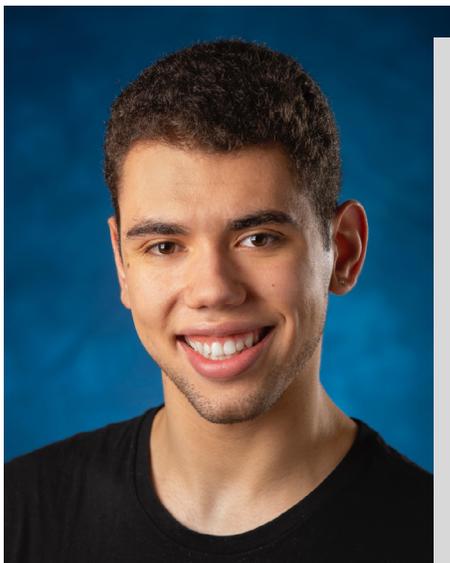
Major: Political Science

YGC Memory: Watching “Hand in Hand,” the virtual concert with Harvard and Princeton, with a group of friends!

Something I've Learned: When trying to help people learn a piece of music, they often already have a very clear idea of what they need help with and all you need to do is listen.



Alex Whittington, *Student Conductor*



Year: Pierson '22

Hometown: New York City

Major: Music

Favorite YGC Memory: Getting to work with Morse Chorale on Brahms's Geistliches Lied. It was such a joyful moment to watch my two favorite ensembles come together and collaborate on something so beautiful!

What I've Learned This Year: Some days of Zoom sectionals are better than others, and that's okay! After a year of online music-making, singing over conference calls has the potential to feel fatiguing instead of healing. But the Glee Club is such an amazing support network. I'm grateful to be part of such an incredible community of musicians with whom I can be vulnerable and earnest about my emotions. Even a heart react from someone off-camera can go a long way.

“That Light in Which I Stood”

This January, the YGC Chamber Singers premiered “That Light in Which I Stood,” a project which combines a virtual recording of Fanny Mendelssohn Hensel’s *Gartenlieder* with student narrations of short stories by Jamaica Kincaid. The performance features animation by Simone Habede. YGC Assistant Conductor and Musical Director of the Chamber Singers Joe Lerangís reflected on the project:

“That Light in Which I Stood” is one of those projects that absolutely would not have happened had it not been for the pandemic. Rehearsing and performing virtually caused us to rethink what it means to create art in a collaborative way, forced us to reimagine the packaging and mediums through which we wanted to present that art, and helped me to reassess my role as the director/conductor/leader of the group. I was incredibly lucky to work with producer Jeanette Moreland on this project, who met with the chamber singers and listened to us bat around ideas before putting out a call for illustrators and animators. The animator we worked with, Simone Hadebe, ended up being a perfect match for the project. She shared our passion for Jamaica Kincaid’s writing and her illustrations evoked the text in deeper ways than I could have imagined. The beauty of this kind of collaboration is that many people’s visions from every different corner of artistic expertise make the project so much more whole than any one person could have imagined. Every single voice involved, whether it was Simone and Jeanette’s artistic voice, the students’ singing and narration, or the timeless voices of Fanny Hensel and Jamaica Kincaid, was absolutely integral to what this project became.



You can watch the performance in its entirety [here](#), and view the program [here](#).

Guest Artists

An unexpected perk of Zoom rehearsals has been the opportunity to welcome musicians and ensembles from far and wide to our rehearsals for conversations about their work. Below are a few of the artists who have visited YGC rehearsals over the course of the year:



Caroline Shaw

In October, Pulitzer-Prize-winning composer, violinist, vocalist, and Yale alum Caroline Shaw visited YGC's rehearsal. Shaw spoke with the Glee Club about her life and career as a multi-faceted musician. The Glee Club has performed various works by Shaw in recent years, including her a cappella work *And the Swallow* and a world premiere of the full orchestration of *Music in Common Time* with the Yale Symphony Orchestra. This semester, the YGC Chamber Singers expect to perform another one of Shaw's works virtually. Learn more about Caroline [here](#).

Tesfa Wondemagegnehu

Renowned conductor, composer, singer, and educator Tesfa Wondemagegnehu spoke with the Glee Club about the intersection of choral music and social justice. In addition to illuminating and hopeful conversation, our session with Tesfa included an exploration of several selections from the [Justice Choir Songbook](#). Learn more about Tesfa [here](#).



Kaleidoscope

Members of the Kaleidoscope Vocal Ensemble visited the Glee Club for a conversation about the significance of racial and ethnic diversity in performance groups and their work to create a more inclusive classical music scene. The ensemble specializes in the performance of early music and new music and will be the soloists for the upcoming world premiere of Joel Thompson's composition *A Prayer for Deliverance* with YGC and Morse Chorale. Learn more about Kaleidoscope [here](#).

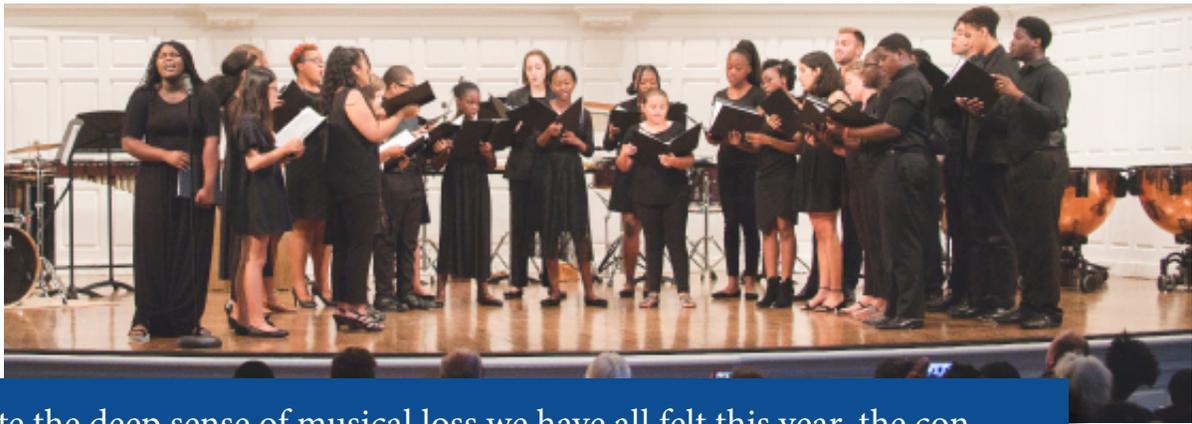
Spotlight on Morse Chorale

This year, the Glee Club is engaged in several exciting collaborations with Morse Chorale, the flagship choral ensemble of Yale's Music in Schools Initiative. Conductor Stephanie Tubiolo (YC '14, YSM '16) reflects on the growing relationship between the two ensembles below:



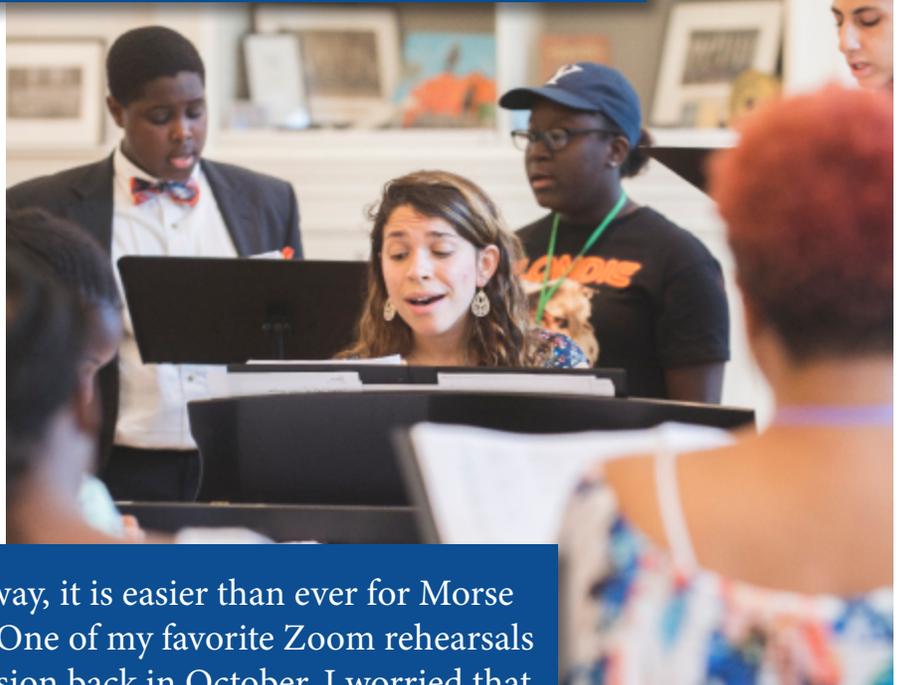
“

The Glee Club was the first group at Yale where I felt like I fit in and the most powerful space of belonging I had ever encountered. When I started conducting and became a Teaching Artist with the Yale Music in Schools Initiative nearly a decade ago, my top priority was to build singing communities that fostered the same sense of unconditional love and acceptance that I felt as an undergraduate in YGC. Since I began New Haven Summer Youth Choir in 2013, which evolved into Morse Chorale in 2015, almost thirty Glee Clubbers have served as Teaching Artists, singing alongside the young artists of New Haven Public Schools and growing a beautiful family. I have always viewed YGC and Morse Chorale as close relatives, each making its nest in Hendrie 201.



Despite the deep sense of musical loss we have all felt this year, the connection between YGC and Morse Chorale has only grown stronger. Over 15 members of YGC are current Teaching Artists, and many teach private voice lessons to our students. Mahima Kumara (YGC '20), the recipient of the year-long Marshall Bartholomew Public Service Fellowship, has made an absolutely immeasurable impact on our ability to serve all the students virtually while simultaneously launching a new college mentorship program for our juniors and seniors. And Jeff, forever our biggest supporter, has invited us to collaborate on several virtual projects, including the [Brahms Geistliches Lied video](#) that was released this fall and an exciting world premiere by Joel Thompson that will be released this spring.

Above: Morse Chorale performing in Sprague Hall at the Yale School of Music; right: Stephanie Tubiolo (center) directing a rehearsal with members of Morse Chorale in Hendrie Hall.



With rehearsals just a few clicks away, it is easier than ever for Morse Chorale to spend time with YGC. One of my favorite Zoom rehearsals this year was our joint Brahms session back in October. I worried that the Morse Chorale students, some as young as 9, might feel uncomfortable on the YGC Zoom. Instead, they logged in and immediately began interacting in the chat. By the end of rehearsal, several of our youngest members even performed solo for the entirety of YGC. Somehow, even though they had never met me, Jeff, the Teaching Artists, the Glee Club, or each other in person, they felt right at home.

*–Stephanie Tubiolo
YC '14, YSM '16*

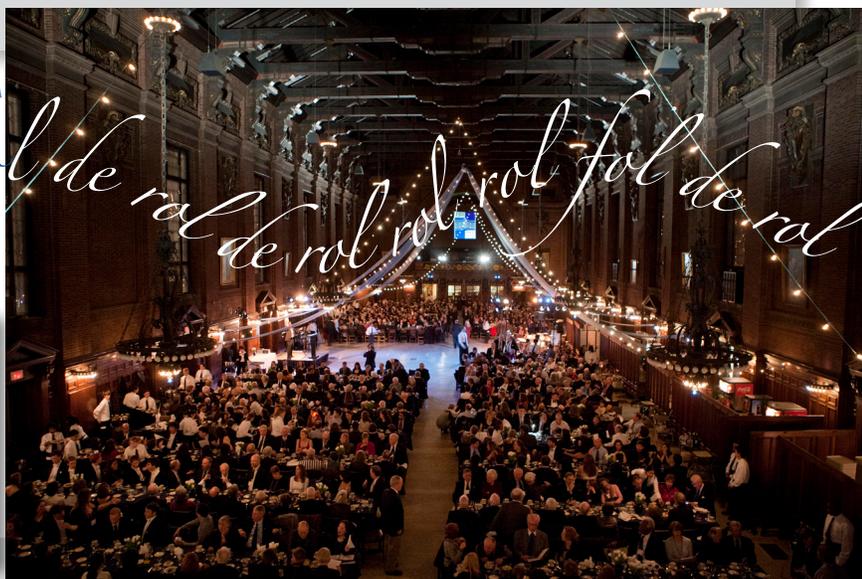
Save the Date: Singing Dinner

One of our cherished spring traditions is our annual Singing Dinner – a chance to reconnect with old friends, welcome the graduating seniors into the YGCA, and most of all, to sing some old favorites together.

We will hold this year's Singing Dinner virtually on **Sunday, May 2 at 7pm ET**. Information about the event will be sent to all alumni via email later this month and will also be shared on the YGCA Facebook page. There will be singing, there will be friendship, and there will be a chance to congratulate our wonderful and historic YGC Class of 2021.

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Sip 'n Sings



Given that we haven't been able to get together in person for over a year, over the past several months, various groups of alumni have come together for a series of virtual "Sip and Sings," which have provided a chance to meet or reconnect with fellow songsters, reminisce, catch up with one another and do some virtual singing. Rachel Wilf-Townsend hosted a meet up for 40-50 alumni from the 2010 decade, while Mark Curchack and Jeff Freeman hosted two sessions for alumni from the 1950s and 1960s sharing both Fenno and tour stories. Clay Kaufman hosted sessions for his own class of 1984 alumni as well as for Greenwich/Fairfield County, CT local alums. And recently, Brooke Lamell Bartolome and Marty Brennan hosted a get together for the active Washington, DC-area alumni crew. More events like this are coming, so keep an eye on your inbox for updates. If you have any interest in hosting your own virtual event, just reach out to Rachel and Marty (rachelbwilf@gmail.com and martybrenn@gmail.com) and we can help set you up.

-Rachel and Marty

Note from the Alumni Coordinators

Hi everyone!

We hope you've enjoyed this edition of the Fol-de-Rol. It was so meaningful for us to recap some of what we've been working on this year for you all. Keep an eye out for our commencement edition, which will celebrate our graduating seniors!

And as always, please contact us at laura.clapp@yale.edu and isabella.zou@yale.edu with any photos, memories, or other content for us to include in future editions of the Fol-de-Rol. All comments and suggestions about the newsletter and other alumni activities are always welcome as well!



Much love,

Laura + Isa

Thank you for reading!